

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 SCCT-01

AID-05 OC-05 CCO-00 /092 W

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O 241500Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6815

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L 13256

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: BEIRUT QUIETER BUT JITTERY

REF: BEIRUT 13169 (23 OCT 75, 1424Z)

1. BEIRUT SPENT A RELATIVELY QUIET NIGHT OCT 23-24. THE TENSIONS RAISED BY RECENT KIDNAPPINGS AND KILLINGS DID NOT ERUPT AS FEARED. AS OF 1200 HOURS (LOCAL) TODAY, LOWER LEVEL OF VIOLENCE CONTINUES DESPITE SPORADIC OUTBREAKS OF SHOOTING AND SNIPER FIRE IN SOME QUARTERS. GOVERNMENT HAS SLAPPED VAGUE "24-HOUR CURFEW" ON SOME SECTIONS OF BEIRUT, BUT SINCE AREAS AFFECTED HAVE NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED THIS MEASURE APPEARS LITTLE MORE THAN BLANKET AUTHORITY TO INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES (ISF) TO CLEAR STREETS ON AD HOC BASIS WHENEVER TROUBLE THREATENS. MEASURE APPARENTLY ALSO DESIGNED TO SIGNAL CITIZENS THEY SHOULD STAY OFF STREETS EVEN IN DAYLIGHT HOURS UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. RECENT WAVE OF KIDNAPPINGS AT ROADBLOCKS IS APPARENT REASON FOR THIS STEP. THOUGH ITS DURATION IS OPEN-ENDED, ISF ENVISAGES MEASURE AS LASTING FOR FEW DAYS ONLY IN HOPE WAVE OF ABDUCTIONS WILL QUICKLY SUBSIDE.

2. ISF ALSO INFORMS US THAT FURTHER USE OF ARMY TROOPS IS PLANNED FOR SECURITY ON VERY LIMITED SCALE. PREMIER KARAME REPORTEDLY AGREED TO THIS STEP, BUT AT THE SAME TIME REITERATED HIS OPPOSITION IN A PARLIAMENT SPEECH YESTERDAY AGAINST USE OF THE ARMY AS POLICY MATTER, SAYING: "IF THE ARMY WERE ABLE TO SETTLE THE PROBLEM WE WOULD NOT HAVE HESITATED FOR ONE HOUR, BUT YOU KNOW THE ABILITY OF THE ARMY." (COMMENT: KARAME THUS SEEMS TO BE CONTINUING HIS QUIET INTRODUCTION OF ARMY UNITS INTO SECURITY PICTURE WHILE VETOING USE OF ARMY ON DRAMATIC SCALE THAT MIGHT NOT ONLY TRIGGER ADVERSE REACTION BUT ALSO REVEAL ARMY'S LIMITED CAPABILITY.)

3. THE BEKAA VALLEY IS REPORTED TO BE TENSE AGAIN FOLLOWING SEVERAL INCIDENTS, INCLUDING THE KILLING OF A ZAHLE MAN. THE ARMY IS TRYING TO CONTAIN THE STRIFE AND SO FAR APPEARS TO HAVE THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL.

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4. NO BANKS OPENED IN BEIRUT TODAY, BUT A FEW MORE SHOPS IN THE HAMRA AREA RAISED SHUTTERS FOR BUSINESS. ECONOMICS MINISTER OSSEIRAN CONFIRMED THAT COUNTRY HAD SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES OF SUGAR, RICE AND FLOUR IF SECURITY CONDITIONS WOULD ALLOW DISTRIBUTION. SOME HOTELS AND OTHER TOURIST-RELATED BUSINESSES HAVE PLACED PART OF SALARIED EMPLOYEES ON A MONTH'S LEAVE, EITHER AT REDUCED OR NO PAY.

5. PAN AM EXTENDED CANCELLATION OF FLIGHTS UNTIL EVENING OCTOBER 26 BUT PAN AM MIDDLE EAST MANAGER OPTIMISTIC ABOUT RESUMPTION THEN IF SECURITY SITUATION DOES NOT DETERIORATE FURTHER. PAN AM ALSO HAS DECIDED TO EXTEND PERIOD OF REDUCED SERVICE REPORTED EARLIER FROM NOVEMBER 30 TO DECEMBER 31. FOLLOWING PAN AM'S LEAD, KLM HAS ALSO CANCELLED FLIGHTS, AND MEA PLANS APPROXIMATE 30 PERCENT REDUCTION IN BEIRUT SERVICE IN ADDITION TO NORMAL WINTER SCHEDULE CUTS BEGINNING NOVEMBER 1.

6. ALTHOUGH A FEW TANKER TRUCKS SOMETIMES NOW MAKE TRIP TO BEIRUT FROM IPC REFINERY IN TRIPOLI, BEIRUT AREA IS STILL ALMOST ENTIRELY DEPENDENT ON IMPORTED GASOLINE DELIVERED THROUGH PORT AT DORA. ANOTHER TANKER SHIP DELIVERED 12,000 TONS YESTERDAY. MAJOR PROBLEM MAY DEVELOP AS WINTER APPROACHES BECAUSE BOTH GASOLINE AND HEATING FUEL MAY HAVE TO BE IMPORTED THROUGH DORA, WHICH HAS LIMITED STORAGE CAPACITY.

7. ELECTRICITY SHORTAGE MAY ALSO BECOME PROBLEM SHORTLY BECAUSE ARMED MEN FOR SEVERAL DAYS HAVE PREVENTED FUEL DELIVERIES TO ZOUK, THE SMALLER OF TWO THERMO ELECTRIC GENERATORS SUPPLYING BEIRUT AREA FROM MEDRECO REFINERY NEAR SIDON. MOREOVER, HYDROELECTRIC GENERATING CAPACITY IS NOT AT ANNUAL END-OF-THE-DRY SEASON LOW AND COUNTRY THEREFORE AT SEASONAL POINT WHERE RELIANCE ON THERMO-ELECTRIC POWER IS GREATEST.

8. THE SESSION OF PARLIAMENT YESTERDAY CENTERED ON THE ABOVE-NOTED SPEECH BY PREMIER KARAME. HE DEFENDED HIS RECORD AS GOVERNMENT HEAD OVER THE PAST MONTHS. ALTHOUGH HE MADE A WIDELY PUBLICIZED DIG AT CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S NATIONAL LIBERALS ("THE TRIBE OF THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR THAT REFUSES TO YIELD TO HIS INSTRUCTIONS"), KARAME'S CONFIDENTIAL

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SPEECH WAS NOT AGGRESSIVELY CRITICAL OF EITHER CHAMOUN OR PRESIDENT FRANGIE, HIS TWO MAIN POLITICAL ANTAGONISTS AT PRESENT STAGE. PARLIAMENT IS DUE TO MEET AGAIN TOMORROW, OCT. 25, AND KARAME MAY SPEAK AGAIN.

9. POLITICAL SUB-COMMITTEE OF "NATIONAL DIALOGUE" CONVENED TODAY SHORTLY AFTER NOON. THERE IS NO WORD YET ON OUTCOME. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SUB-COMMITTEES ARE ALSO MEETING TODAY AFTER EXTENDED RECESSES TO ATTEMPT PROGRESS IN THEIR AREAS.

10. AS FAR AS WE AWARE, ALL AMCITS ARE SAFE WITH EXCEPTION TWO USIA OFFICERS WHOSE ABDUCTION OCT. 22 REMAINS UNSOLVED (COVERED IN SEPARATE REPORTING).
GODLEY

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